



Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Legal Office, 3 West Road, Virks Building, 4th floor, Cranston, RI 02920  
phone: 401.462.2326 fax: 401.462.1678

April 16, 2018

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman  
House Committee on Oversight  
101 State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's April 2018 update on the RI Bridges system, which covers the reporting period March 15 – April 15, 2018. As agreed to, henceforth, we will submit monthly updates on the following topics; this monthly submission replaces all previous status reports to the Honorable Committee on Oversight.

- System performance and improvement;
- DHS staffing and employee training;
- New application backlog;
- SNAP timeliness;
- CCAP off-cycle payments;
- And LTSS interim payments.

Our priority every day is serving Rhode Islanders – promoting their health and success and being there when they need us. Fixing RI Bridges is an important part of the equation. We continue to hold Deloitte accountable to this work and recently extended our contract with the vendor, while we begin planning for a long-term partner. This extension ensures the work to stabilize RI Bridges continues uninterrupted, our customers are protected, and the State does not pay for work twice, which we would if we shifted to another vendor at this juncture. Our federal partners have approved the extension agreement; a copy of those approval letters is attached.

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve and your interest in the health of the RI Bridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Beane  
Secretary



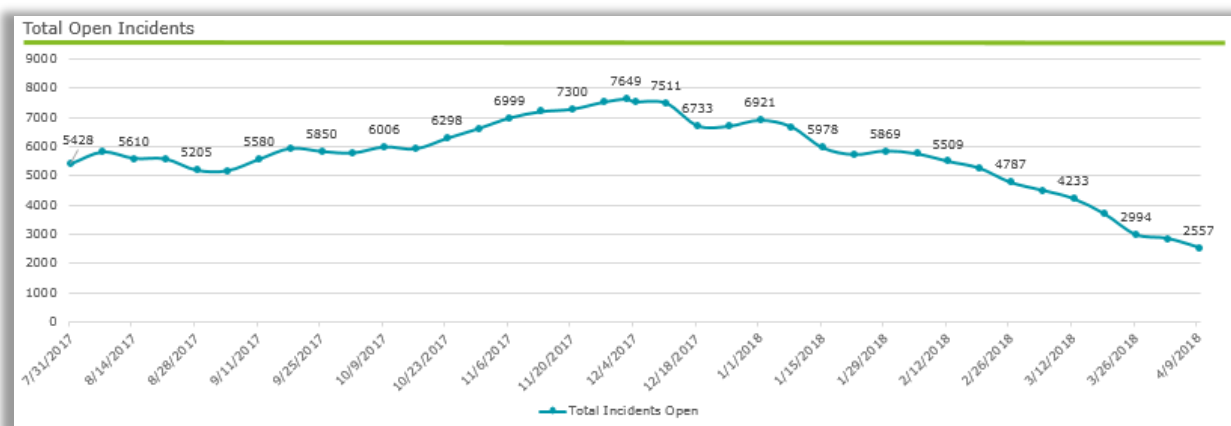
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## April 2018

The Executive Office of Health & Human Services coordinates and supports the delivery of programs and services across Rhode Island's health and human service agencies. Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life, and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of work on RI Bridges is an important part of the equation. We are not yet where we need to be with RI Bridges, but progress is being made; we have enhanced the system, improved its usability, and reduced overall defects. As we move along, we will continue to put the pieces in place to ensure the system is fully compliant and operational and that we have a strong workforce and management structure behind it. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

### SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

An important measure of system health and stability is the total number of incidents logged related to the RI Bridges system. An incident accounts for any concern experienced in the system that needs to be investigated and, as needed, resolved. IT systems generally require updates and enhancements during their useful life, so an incident number will never hit zero. However, the incident count in RI Bridges should gradually decline over time as the system is stabilized. The number of new and existing incidents logged into RI Bridges has been declining steadily over the last several months. As of the beginning of April, open incidents totaled 2,557 – a 67 percent drop since December 2017.



Last month, RI Bridges underwent a major system upgrade – known as a “release.” This release included updating four system portals and over 31,000 lines of code. By comparison, a previous release, introduced in February, included just over 15,000 lines of code. Below are a few highlights from the March 2018 release:

- No impacts to existing operations or significant upticks in the incident log resulted from this upgrade;
- Improved the customer portal, making it easier to apply for benefits online and cutting by half the number of questions posed to SNAP applicants;
- Streamlined the processing of LTSS applications, eliminating 20 work screens for staff;
- Automated eligibility determinations, eliminating the need to manually close out cases as federal rules change;
- Enhanced data integrity to improve the accuracy of benefits.

## DHS STAFFING + TRAINING

The Department of Human Services (DHS) continues to make progress in strengthening its workforce. Since last month, DHS held 17 days of training, totaling over 100 hours, for 250 employees and is working to integrate policy, system, and process training. Another 77 employees participated in learning labs, in which employees across most career tracks – from customer service aides to supervisors – receive hands-on training and increase their proficiency in the RI Bridges system.

Other highlights over the last month include:

- In March, DHS hired 11 new eligibility technicians, all of whom completed nine days of SNAP training. Three other eligibility technicians participated in medical training.
- So far in April, the Department has hired 10 new employees; they are scheduled to exit SNAP training on April 19.
- A new social case worker will join DHS in May.

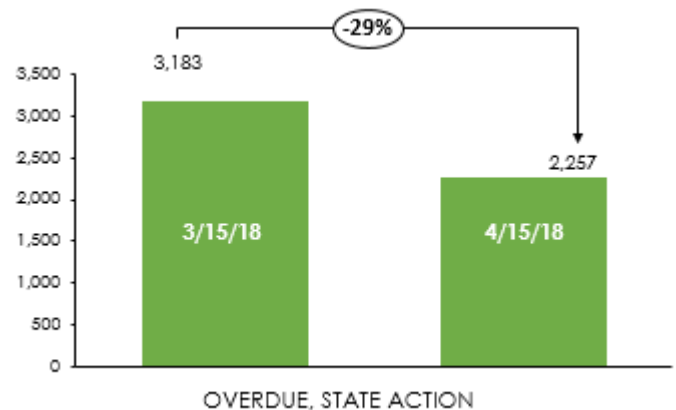
The Department currently has 93 vacancies and is focused on filling customer service aid and social case worker positions. These staff will support timely scanning and indexing of applications and work on LTSS cases.

## NEW APPLICATION BACKLOG

A continued focus on system improvements and strengthening the DHS workforce has led to sharp reductions in the backlog of new applications. The total number of cases awaiting a benefit determination – overdue and not overdue – dropped 17 percent over the last month. The total overdue dropped more than 20 percent during the same period. A contributing factor was the marked reduction in overdue LTSS applications.

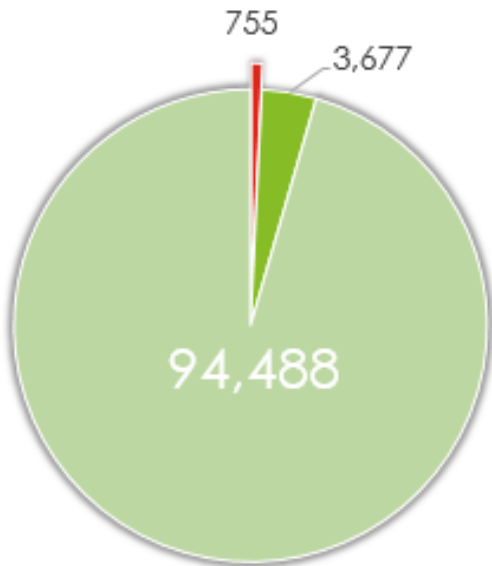
	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Exp	12	39	51	34	9	43	94
SNAP Non	475	85	560	124	3	127	687
CCAP	11	115	126	11	43	54	180
GPA Burial	1	4	5	1	10	11	16
SSP	0	22	22	0	22	22	44
GPA	70	27	97	99	52	151	248
RIW	124	76	200	31	28	59	259
Undet. Cash	8	2	10	61	20	81	91
Undet. Med	5	134	139	49	426	475	614
MAGI	106	108	214	306	360	666	880
MPP	5	174	179	46	149	195	374
Complex Med.	32	76	108	57	293	350	458
LTSS	8	795	803	29	842	871	1,674
Totals	857	1,657	2,514	848	<b>2,257</b>	3,105	5,619

For SNAP, over the last four months, the number of overdue applications dropped from 780 to less than 20 today. Our focus continues to be on addressing the overall number of aging cases in the system that are awaiting state action.



## SNAP TIMELINESS + SPECIAL MASTER UPDATE

The combined SNAP timeliness rate for March is 83 percent, which breaks down to 88 percent for expedited and 78 percent for non-expedited; this is up from 81 and 76 percent respectively in February.

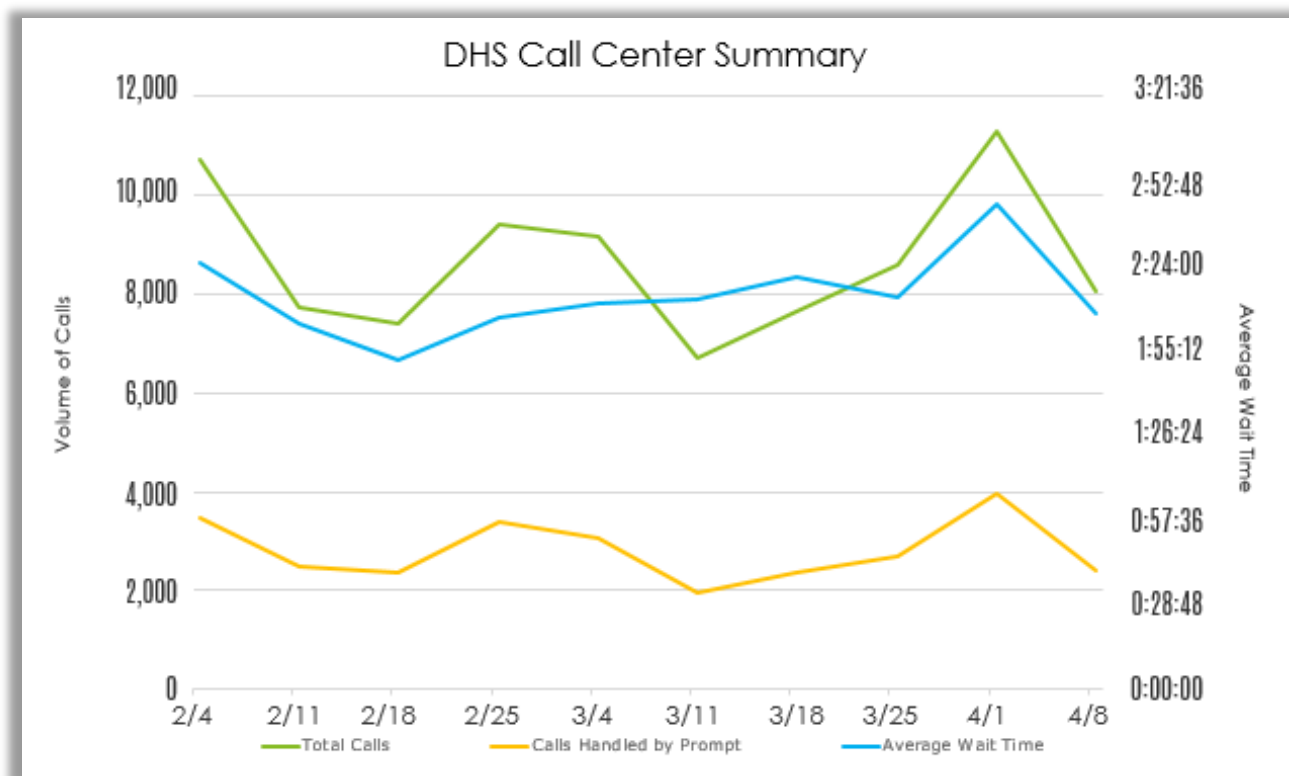


In March, benefits were issued on time to more than 94,000 households, and more than 80 percent of new applications were processed timely. While the number of applications not processed timely represents just one percent of the total SNAP population, the State remains focused on improving timeliness and has created a rapid-response team that is focused on quickly resolving issues that may 'block' the processing of some applications.

Also in March, DHS was in contact with FNS regarding UHIP Special Master Deming Sherman's recent order. The order requires DHS to contract with an outside vendor to augment its call-center workforce and reduce call wait times.

The FNS correspondence is included as an attachment to this report. An update on call wait time is below.

Untimely March Applications | Timely Applications | Total SNAP Population



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Since last month, 93 percent of child care providers received on-cycle payments. Functionality was also added to the child care portal to improve summer camp enrollment, which child care providers played an important role in helping to design and test.

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (20, 20A, 20B)	735	\$2.6 million
Off-Cycle (20A, 20B)	44	\$86,516
Providers Off-Cycle/Total	5.99%	NA
Payments Off-Cycle/Total	3.30%	NA

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (21, 21A, 21B)	763	\$2.7 million
Off-Cycle (21A, 21B)	54	\$109,967
Providers Off-Cycle/Total	7.08%	NA
Payments Off-Cycle/Total	3.95%	NA

## LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. Given the historical and system challenges with LTSS, we established a contingency payment process to ensure nursing and assisted-living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, as work continues to drive down the backlog. In SFY2018 (between July 2017 and April 2018), nursing facilities received \$47.5 million in state funds; \$930,000 was disbursed to assisted-living sites. A schedule of payments by facility is attached to this report.

As previously disclosed, the State has plans in place to ensure that we will receive matching federal funds for the contingency payments cited in the recent Auditor General's report; we have already made progress. As of April 10, 2018, the State has recovered over \$1,000,000 in payments, while making marked progress in clearing the application backlog. Once an application is approved, a proper claim is paid to the provider with the corresponding federal match; in some cases, this has resulted in a double payment to a provider – a payment through the system and a manual payment from the State. We are working with affected providers to recover the initial contingency payment paid.

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and FNS are important partners to the State. We continue to meet regularly to review progress on the RI Bridges system and to secure federal funding through the standard Advance Planning Document (APD) process. Attached to this report are recent letters from FNS and CMS, approving Rhode Island's continued federal funding through June 30, 2018 – as well as the State's contract extension with Deloitte through March 2019.